

**News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth,  
Senator John Thune and Senator Tim Johnson  
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**SD Delegation Supports Governor's Request and    Asks White House for Emergency Declaration**

**Washington, DC** – With Governor Rounds' preliminary damage assessment from the recent blizzard now complete, U.S. Senators Tim Johnson (D-SD) and John Thune (R-SD) and U.S. Representative Stephanie Herseth (D-SD) today called upon President George W. Bush to declare a large portion of South Dakota a major disaster area and asked the President to instruct federal agencies to expedite the delivery of all forms of federal disaster assistance.

"Each of us has personally witnessed the severity of the recent winter storm, which continues to disrupt the lives of thousands of South Dakotans," the delegation said in their letter to President Bush. "[T]he preliminary damage assessment completed by the state in cooperation with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials makes clear that the scale of the storm's impact exceeds the state's response capacity and therefore justifies federal assistance as specified in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act."

Damage to the electricity grid alone includes approximately 9,400 downed poles, which left as many as 56,600 customers without power, and many remain without power today.

Full Letter to the President follows:

December 5, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

As members of the South Dakota congressional delegation, we write to express our full support of Governor M. Michael Rounds' request for a presidential disaster declaration for our state. This declaration will help to facilitate South Dakota's rapid recovery from the severe winter storm of November 27, 28, and 29.

Each of us has personally witnessed the severity of the recent winter storm, which continues to disrupt the lives of thousands of South Dakotans. Damage to the electricity grid alone includes approximately 9,400 downed poles, which left as many as 56,600 customers without power, and many remain without power today.

As Governor Rounds' disaster declaration request indicates, state and local officials responded to the storm by implementing appropriate elements of South Dakota's State Emergency Operations Plan in accordance with federal law. These emergency operations activities undoubtedly reduced the storm's impact and accelerated the state's recovery from that impact. Nevertheless, the preliminary damage assessment completed by the state in cooperation with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials makes clear that the scale of the storm's impact exceeds the state's response capacity and therefore justifies federal assistance as specified in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

In light of these considerations, we respectfully request that you declare a major disaster for relevant areas of our state and that you instruct federal agencies to expedite the delivery of all forms of federal disaster assistance for which South Dakota is eligible based upon that declaration. We are pleased to offer any assistance that you may require in fulfilling this request.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter. Please do not hesitate to

contact any of us if we can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

Tim Johnson  
U.S. Senate                      John Thune  
U.S. Senate                      Stephanie Herseth  
U.S. House of Representatives

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*Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.*